

For Discussion Purposes Only

Introduction

In preparation for our recommendations to Governor O'Malley, we gathered information about citizenship program models from organizations in Illinois, California, New Jersey, Washington and Massachusetts. Below are the findings of four states with operational programs.¹

Illinois

Contact: Lisa Thakkar, New Americans Policy Project Coordinator, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights and Luvia Quiñones New Americans Initiative Assistant Director, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

A. Citizenship Program Description/ History

- In 2005, the State of Illinois partnered with the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR) to launch the New Americans Initiative (NAI). The New Americans Initiative (NAI) program was developed based on research done with the Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) population in Illinois.
 - The goal of the initial research was two-fold: where the LPRs were living in the state of Illinois and what types of barriers were preventing LPRs from naturalizing.
- After the information and data was collected, NAI focused on finding existing organizations that provide citizenship services. In the first and second years of NAI, 40-45 organizations were involved in outreach and providing services to the LPR community statewide. Currently, there are 35 organizations participating in NAI.
- Today, NAI organizations host regular celebrations for the new U.S. citizens to encourage civic involvement post naturalization. At the celebration, each newly naturalized U.S. citizen receives gift certificates from local businesses, voter registration forms, and local volunteering opportunities etc.
- Since 2005, NAI has aided 37,000 LPRs file for U.S. citizenship and educated over 270,000 LPRs through a statewide media and public education campaign about the importance of naturalization.

B. Funding

- Funded at \$3 million/year through the State of Illinois through the Illinois Department of Human Services.
- After some initial trial and error in the first two years of funding, NAI standardized the request for proposal (RFP) process to give out \$40,000-\$50,000 outreach grants and \$45,000-\$130,000 service grants to 35 organizations. The difference in the funding awarded to service providers is determined by:
 - The number of citizenship applications, workshops, clinics, classes and orientations organized by an organization (capacity building and staff).
 - The number of LPRs requesting services (demand).
- ICIRR receives 10% of the NAI budget (roughly 300,000) for administrative costs.

¹ According to Shai Goldstein, Executive Director of the New Jersey Immigration Policy Network, the New Jersey Executive Order does not have a specific citizenship program clause in the description of the Governor's Advisory Panel. The New Jersey Immigration Policy Network ended their direct citizenship program in the 1990s.

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C. Recommendations

- To ensure the success of a NAI program in Maryland there needs to be a strong lobbying and advocacy campaign. ICIRR encourages the 35 organizations to invite local, state, and federal legislators to citizenship workshops to participate in filling out applications or attend naturalization ceremonies.

D. Future Plans

- To expand the NAI, especially to communities with new and growing immigrant populations. That will enable the program to reach even more of the 404,000 immigrants in Illinois who are currently eligible for citizenship and facilitate a more rapid integration of ethnically and geographically diverse populations.

Massachusetts

Contact: Sarang Sekhavat, Federal Policy Director of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) and Barbara Evans, Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI)

A. Citizenship Program Description/ History

- The Citizenship for New Americans (CNA) program is a state funded program to provide services to some of the estimated 300,000 Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) in Massachusetts who are eligible for naturalization.
- The CNA program began in 2006 after a long advocacy campaign by grassroots organizations, service providers, the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) and the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI).
- MIRA does not provide these direct services, but is funded to provide technical assistance to the 25 service providers and act as a liaison with USCIS whenever problems arise with pending applications. MIRA organizes quarterly meetings between CNA program providers and USCIS to address consistent problems and concerns.
- The CNA program has helped about 1,000 people apply for citizenship each year.

B. Funding

- There had been a similar program funded at \$2 million/year, but that was ended during the last recession. The CNA program in its current form has been funded around \$600,000/year.
- For FY09, the CNA program was funded at \$609,000, of which \$20,000 has been set aside for MIRA administrative costs.

C. Recommendations

- To develop an on-going and comprehensive process to follow up with LPR clients to show the efficacy of the program.

D. Future Plans

- With the threat of budget cuts looming, the CNA program will mobilize providers to lobby at the State House in April to try and secure level-funding for the program

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Washington

Contact: Hannelore Ferber Makhani, New Americans Program Coordinator, One America

A. Citizenship Program Description/ History

- Governor signed an Executive Order in May 2008 which established a two year Council. One America is a Co-Chair of the Council.
- 12% of Washington's population is foreign born. Highest immigrant groups (estimated) are Asian, Latino and Eastern European.
- In September 2008, One America executed a statewide mapping project to see where immigrants live in Washington, what types of services are already in existence for immigrants and are currently developing plans to address the gaps/need.
- Once the funding contract was finalized after a 4 month budget hold, One America developed an RFP process for agencies. The RFP deadline was December 1st and by December 17th, One America had sub-contracted \$125,000 to 12 agencies.
- Due to the limited timeframe, One America decided to give 6 grants of \$10,000 - \$20,000 each to agencies with existing programs to make their services free to the community. One America gave 6 grants of \$3,000-\$5,000 each to agencies interested in developing citizenship programs in the future.
- In January 2009, One America began a \$90,000 media campaign with print, radio, TV, and transit advertisements. 80% of individuals that request/sign up for citizenship services come in to the agencies because they have seen an advertisement.
- A 20 language telephone hotline was created for basic information about the naturalization process and where to access naturalization services in the state.

B. Funding

- Original funding request was for \$2 million over 2 years.
- For FY09, One America was funded at \$344,000, of which \$20,000 was set aside for administrative costs. Budget contract finalized November 1, 2008.
- One America received a 25% match from the Gates Foundation.

C. Recommendations

- To encourage support from the LPR community in a lobbying effort.
 - For example, outreach coordinators at One America go out into the communities with a camera and took pictures of Legal Permanent Residents and asked for a quote. Once they have generated enough stories, they bring packets of photos/quotes to their meetings with Legislators. They always receive very positive feedback.

D. Future Plans

- Continue to develop the curriculum for the citizenship program. Currently, the Community College board determines the curriculum throughout Washington, so One

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America has developed a new curriculum that touches on the same topic but focuses on civic involvement.

CALIFORNIA

Contact: Teresa Castellanos, Interim Director, Office of Human Resources Santa Clara County

A. Citizenship Program Description/ History

- Santa Clara County program began in 1996 with the Welfare Reform Savings because Legal Permanent Residents were cut off from the safety net. Santa Clara County became responsible for assisting Legal Permanent Residents.
- Initially, the program contracted funding to agencies providing citizenship services in 7-8 languages. 2 of these programs were BIA accredited agencies.
- Subsequently, Santa Clara County has developed monthly meetings with 6 agencies to update one another on citizenship services, trainings, and referrals. 15 agencies are part of the overall collaboration of which 6 are active in the monthly updates.
- In 2009, the program only received funding from Santa Clara County. They have expanded their services to offer a hotline and website to answer citizenship questions.
- In January 2009, the program partnered with the Opportunity Fund to provide financial assistance with the USCIS citizenship fees. The Opportunity Fund received \$1.8 million from the Knight Foundation to create IDA savings accounts for citizenship applicants. Currently, there are 6 applicants participating in the program and they are allowed to have 500 applicants for the year.
- For FY10, Santa Clara County has cut 1/3 of the program's \$700,000 budget. However, the Silicon Valley Foundation has agreed to cover the loss as well as put in additional resources.

B. Funding

- 1996 – \$1.5 million from County funds, State funds, Private businesses, etc.
- 2009 – \$700,000 in County funds. The funding is divided into two types of grants for agencies: 1. Mini-grants for specific ethnic/language communities and 2. Service providers. Agencies who are awarded mini grants receive around \$3,000 each for the fiscal year. Agencies who are existing citizenship service providers receive \$80,000 - \$150,000 each for the fiscal year.

C. Recommendations

- To emphasize the importance of language access.
 - For example, all Santa Clara County produced naturalization materials are printed in over 10 languages.

D. Future Plans

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- To continue ways to attract private investors to fund the program in addition to County funds.